

220: SB An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Labor History in the Public School Curriculum

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Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee: My name is John Altieri and I am the former AFT Ct. Jurisdictional Vice President for Teachers.

I am here today not only speaking as a union leader, but as a retired Social Studies teacher for over 38 years in the Norwalk Public Schools. Teaching labor history would give our students the opportunity to not only join a union when they graduate, but also to help them to understand what it means to be a union member.

Students in Connecticut public schools are never shown the contributions labor has made to help all workers and their families. Teaching labor history in the social studies classes would help our students to better understand how the labor movement has raised the standard of living in America and how it has helped to create and to build a stronger middle class. The labor movement has brought us the five day 40 hour week, health and safety protection, pensions, grievance procedures, and collective bargaining, to name just a few, that have protected workers on the job and raised their standard of living.

Including labor history in the curriculum will demonstrate to our students the struggles the unions have made to achieve these rights which included being jailed, losing their jobs, and, in many cases, their lives. Without including labor history in our curriculum, students do not learn a big part of American history: how our country has grown and works. Teaching labor history will give our students of all ages and grade levels knowledge needed to think and reason for themselves about their own lives and what they want to achieve in the future.

When entering the job market, students should have the information needed to decide whether or not to join a union. It is important for students to understand the hard work and sacrifices those in the labor movement have made to better the lives of all workers, union and non-union.

Therefore, I urge you to support SB 220: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Labor History in the Connecticut Public School Curriculum.

Thank you.